

Congressman

ROBERT MENENDEZ

13th Congressional District ~ New Jersey



December 2004

Report to the People

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

Dear Friend,



I would like to extend my warmest wishes to you and your family for the upcoming year, and I look forward to continuing my work for you here at home and as your voice in the United States House of Representatives. As the 108th Congress has come to a close, this is a good time to update you on recent occurrences in Congress and some of the issues that my office has focused on.

I am honored to write to you as the recently re-elected Chairman of the House Democratic Caucus, a position that will continue to provide you, as my constituent, with more influence in Washington, D.C. Earlier this year, we unveiled our "New Partnership for America's Future," a plan which will provide prosperity, national security, fairness, opportunity, community, and accountability for families in New Jersey. Please be assured that my colleagues and I will continue to work to ensure that all voices are heard and a sound agenda for America is implemented.

As always, I remain honored to represent you in Congress and committed to championing the priorities that you and your family care about. **You may contact me at one of my offices or through my website at www.menendez.house.gov, where you may sign up to receive periodic e-newsletter updates.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature of Robert Menendez in red ink, written in a cursive style.

Robert Menendez

Working for a New Partnership for America's Future

Recently, the "New Partnership for America's Future" was unveiled in Congress with the goal of strengthening our nation and its middle class. It is a commitment to provide economic prosperity, national security, fairness, opportunity, community, and accountability to families in New Jersey and across our nation. This New Partnership includes the following components:

Prosperity

All Americans should have the opportunity to succeed and to live a secure and comfortable life with good jobs, affordable health care, a growing economy which has stable prices, and fiscal responsibility in government. That is why our plan would promote prosperity by creating new jobs, enacting middle class tax relief, and rewarding companies that create jobs at home.

Security

Thousands of brave men and women from New Jersey are currently serving our country in Afghanistan and Iraq. Our plan provides security through a strong military, sound diplomatic alliances, new resources for our first responders, tighter security at our ports, and collecting reliable intelligence to keep us safe by preventing terrorist attacks before they occur.



Congressman Menendez talks with a teacher and her Starting Points of Hudson County students about early childhood education.

Fairness

Through much of our nation's history, America has been viewed as the land of hope, dreams, and opportunity for all. Our plan would ensure this fairness by lowering the cost of health care, ensuring equal opportunity, and eliminating tax loopholes so all Americans pay their fair share.

Opportunity

Education is the key that unlocks the door to opportunity, so we must provide all

of America's children with a chance to reach their full potential. Our plan would provide opportunity through high-quality early childhood education, vibrant and accountable public schools, and an affordable college education.

Community

People are often worried about the safety and health of their neighborhoods. Therefore, our plan would support our communities by strengthening law enforcement, expanding affordable housing, and safeguarding our environment.

Accountability

Constituents often tell me they wish there was more accountability in the government. Our plan will demand accountability by restoring fiscal responsibility, balancing budgets, reducing the national debt, holding those in power responsible for their actions, and requiring real consequences for CEOs and corporations that break the law.

Enacting Transit Security for America

On March 11, 2004, four bombs ripped through commuter trains during the morning rush-hour in Madrid, Spain, killing almost 200 people. According to the National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, since September 11, 2001 there have been over five times as many attacks on public trans-

portation targets around the world than on aviation targets, with nearly ten times the number of fatalities. And yet, during that time, the federal government has spent over 60 times more money on securing airplanes and airports than it has on our buses and trains. Since far more people are using public transportation each day than are flying, this means the government is spending over 1,000 times more per airline passenger than it is for each transit passenger.

The 13th Congressional District was home to many people who lost their lives at the World Trade Center, and is home to many more who lost friends, neighbors, and loved ones on that tragic day. Our communi-

ties rely heavily on public transportation. Every day, tens of thousands of commuters pack the commuter rail, light rail, buses, and ferries trying to get to work or school. This is why I have introduced the Rail and Mass Transportation Security Act, which would provide over \$10 billion in sorely needed security funds for Amtrak and America's public transportation systems. As a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I will be fighting next year to hold hearings on and enact this essential legislation, and to make sure the federal government starts living up to its obligations to protect everyone who travels in this country, whether they go by plane, car, bus, or train.

As the events in Madrid and elsewhere have showed us, public transportation systems are tempting targets for terrorists. The federal government needs to make a serious investment in transit security now, before tragedy strikes on the roads or rails, because the effects of a serious attack could be even more devastating than 9/11.



Congressman Menendez unveils his new rail security bill at the Hoboken Train Station.

Protecting our Nation Against Future Terrorist Attacks

On September 11, 2001, our country suffered the most horrific terrorist attack in our history. In our district, 122 of our friends and neighbors never returned home from work that day, never returned to their families. The smoking ruins of the Twin Towers were visible for all of us to see and, to this day, their absence is still felt every time we look across the Hudson River and see the void where the Towers once stood. The events of that day are very personal to us. We are reminded of them always.

To do everything possible to make sure the tragic events of 9/11 are never repeated, Congress created the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States ("9/11 Commission") to undertake a comprehensive, independent, and bipartisan review of the events leading up to the September 11 terrorist attacks, the attacks themselves, and our response to them. The Commission was also directed to provide Congress and the Administration with recommendations for preventing future terrorist attacks. From the beginning, I was a very strong advocate for the creation of the 9/11 Commission.

In July 2004, under the leadership of former New Jersey Governor Kean and former Congressman Hamilton, the bipartisan Commission unanimously made 41 recommendations to strengthen our country against terrorists by making sweeping changes to our government and our intelligence community.

Shortly after the Commission released its report, many of us in Congress announced our strong support for the rapid enactment of the Commission's recommendations.

Congress began holding hearings in August on the recommendations in that report, and we introduced legislation in both the House and Senate in September to implement the Commission's recommendations. While the Senate bill closely tracked the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, the House bill took a different approach in numerous areas and included a number of unrelated and controversial provisions. For example, the Senate bill would have implemented the 9/11 Commission's recommendation that the Director of National Intelligence be given comprehensive authority over the personnel and budgets of the nation's intelligence agencies. The House bill, in contrast, would have given the new Director of National Intelligence only limited authority over the defense intelligence agencies – which receive roughly 80 percent of all government intelligence spending.

The Senate bill was passed on October 6 by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 96 to 2. House Democrats, in an attempt to create a comprehensive bipartisan bill that would lead to quick enactment into law, proposed a simi-



Congressman Menendez calls for passage of the intelligence reform bill with 9/11 families, Senator Corzine, and Congresswoman Maloney.

lar bill to the Senate. This bill, which I offered on October 7, was narrowly defeated by a vote of 203-213. In marked contrast to the bipartisanship in the Senate, however, the House passed its version on October 8 by a contentious vote of 282 to 134.

As a negotiator on the House-Senate "conference committee," I have been working for over two months to resolve the differences between the two bills. A final version must be approved and sent to the President for his signature before the end of the

year to become law. Fortunately, this committee agreed upon a bill that would implement the critical recommendations of the 9/11 Commission.

The agreement would establish a Director of National Intelligence in charge of all of the government's intelligence gathering, analysis, and counter-terrorism operations. It would

streamline and unify our intelligence-gathering capabilities, foster greater intelligence sharing, and end the senseless turf battles that plague the current system. By doing so, the bill would improve the overall quality of our intelligence.

The legislation also contains numerous upgrades to the security of our nation's borders, including thousands of additional border patrol agents, immigration and customs investigators, and detention beds. It would test advanced technologies like sensors, video, and unmanned aerial vehicles in securing our borders, and would criminalize the smuggling of immigrants.

This bill has the support of the President and the Vice President. It has the support of the majority of 9/11 families and the entire 9/11 Commission. And it has a bipartisan majority of support in both the House and the Senate. On every front, it would strengthen our intelligence and homeland security, making our families safer.

In fact, Governor Kean and Congressman Hamilton warned recently that Congressional inaction on this legislation could endanger national security. I share this concern and believe we must seize the moment to institute reforms that will make the American people safer and more secure. America needs a complete and total strategy to fight terrorism. The families of the victims of 9/11 deserve no less.

Fortunately, in December both the House and Senate approved this legislation, which will now go to the President to be signed into law.

We owe the 9/11 families our sincere and heartfelt thanks. There would have been no Commission without them. It was their perseverance and their quest for the truth about what happened to their loved ones that made not only the 9/11 Commission, but this legislation, possible.

Congressman Bob Menendez

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Providing Affordable & Accessible Health Care

Alzheimer's

November was Alzheimer's Awareness Month, and November 15th was New Jersey's official Alzheimer's Awareness Day—a day when we stopped to think about the more than 350,000 individuals and family caregivers in New Jersey affected by this illness.

Alzheimer's is a far-reaching disease that puts a serious strain on families, affecting not only their lives, jobs, and finances, but also their mental and physical well-being. That is why I am a proud cosponsor and supporter of legislation that would significantly increase our government's investment in Alzheimer's research as well as patient and caregiver support initiatives. This comprehensive legislation would increase funding for the National Institutes of Health to \$1.4 billion a year so we can continue to improve our ability to one day prevent, treat and, ultimately, cure this disease.

Specifically, this legislation would provide a tax credit of up to \$3,000 to help pay the expenses of those who care for loved ones with long-term care needs. This bill would also increase authorization levels for a series of programs to assist families in caring for their loved ones, increase funding for research initiatives focused on prevention and care, and authorize funding for a public education campaign to inform the public about prevention techniques.

Congress needs to make wise investments on behalf of the American people.

Alzheimer's research is one of those important and critical investments we must make now, so that future generations of Americans will have the medical resources and knowledge to cope with the challenge of caring for a parent, family member, or friend living with this disease.

Patient Navigator

The existence of health disparities in this nation is undeniable. Research has shown that due to various barriers, minorities and low-income populations suffer higher rates of mortality from certain diseases.

Although there are many different explanations for the higher rates of disease among minorities and low-income populations, all roads lead back to one underlying problem: they are less likely to seek health care early, and thus are less likely to receive early screening and detection. As a result, their diseases are found at a later stage, leaving them with much less chance of survival.

In light of these facts, I introduced a bill in the 108th Congress to address health care disparities. This legislation, the Patient Navigator, Outreach, and Chronic Disease Prevention Act, has three main components: 1) public education and outreach to get people into the health care system early; 2) access to screening and early detection to give everyone the same chance at survival; and 3) a patient repre-



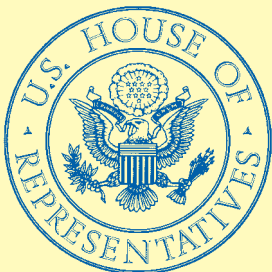
Congressman Menendez announces health disparities funding with Senators Corzine and Lautenberg and Congressman Payne at UMDNJ in Newark.

sentative to help patients navigate our complex health care system and ensure that they get the treatment they need to stay healthy.

After years of hard work to build a strong coalition of support from across the country and extensive bipartisan support in Congress, we have brought the Patient Navigator Act to the forefront of the legislative agenda. Recently, the bill passed in the House of Representatives. While the Senate did not consider the bill this Congress, I plan on reintroducing and working toward its enactment next year.

Congress of the United States
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Official Business



This mailing was prepared, published, and mailed at taxpayer expense.

Robert Menendez

M.C.
PRSRT STD